TAKE CONTROL OF
macOS MEDIA APPS

Go Beyond iTunes
Manage your audio and video content in the NEW Music, Podcasts, TV, and Books apps in Catalina

by KIRK McELHEARN
$14.99

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# Table of Contents

**Read Me First** ........................................................................................................ 5
  Updates and More .................................................................................................. 5
  Links ................................................................................................................... 6
  What’s New in This Book ...................................................................................... 6

**Introduction** ......................................................................................................... 9

**Quick Start** .......................................................................................................... 11

**What’s New in Apple’s Media Apps** ................................................................. 13

**Play Music** .......................................................................................................... 15
  Play Music .......................................................................................................... 15
  Control Music with the MiniPlayer ...................................................................... 23
  View Lyrics for Your Songs ................................................................................... 25
  Get Notifications as Your Music Changes .......................................................... 26
  Search for Music .................................................................................................. 28
  Let Genius Choose What to Play ......................................................................... 31
  Use Up Next to View and Manage a Music Queue ............................................. 36
  Make Your Music Sound Better .......................................................................... 41
  Stream Music in Your Home ................................................................................... 43
  Control Music from an iPhone, iPad, or Apple Watch ....................................... 44
  Display Eye Candy While Listening to Music ...................................................... 47
  Minimalize the Music App .................................................................................... 48
  Watch Music Videos ............................................................................................. 49

**Stream Apple Music** ............................................................................................ 51
  Discover Apple Music ........................................................................................... 51
  Listen to Apple Music Radio .................................................................................. 60

**View Your Music and Other Content** ............................................................... 66
  Use the Sidebar ................................................................................................... 66
  View Your Music Library ....................................................................................... 69
  Use Contextual Menus ......................................................................................... 80

**Store Your Music Library in the Cloud** ........................................................... 82
  Manage Music and the Cloud ............................................................................. 82
Use Cloud Music Library ................................................... 87

Use the iTunes Store ...................................................... 101
   About Your iTunes Store Account ..................................... 101
   Shop in the iTunes Store ............................................... 102

Tag Your Music Files .................................................... 110
   Understanding Tags ...................................................... 110
   Add or Change Tags ................................................... 113
   Add Lyrics to Your Tracks ........................................... 121
   Album Artwork and Music Files .................................... 122
   Rate the Songs You Love; and the Rest ............................ 125

Organize Your Music and Create Playlists .................. 131
   On Playlists .................................................................. 131
   Create a Standard Playlist .......................................... 132
   About Smart Playlists ................................................ 136
   Organize Playlists ...................................................... 144
   Eliminate Duplicates From Your Library ....................... 147

Manage and Share Media Files .................................. 150
   How the Media Apps Organize Files ............................... 150
   Store Media Files on an External Drive ......................... 153
   Manage a Huge Music Library ...................................... 156
   Create More than One Music Library on Your Mac .......... 157
   Share Your Music and TV Libraries over a Network ....... 158
   Back Up Your Media Files ........................................... 162

Listen to Audiobooks ................................................... 164
   Play Audiobooks ........................................................ 164
   Manage an Audiobook Library ..................................... 166

Watch Movies and TV Shows in the TV App .......... 168
   Browse Content in the TV App ..................................... 168
   Add Videos to Your TV Library ................................... 170

Listen to and Watch Podcasts ................................. 174
   Find Podcasts .......................................................... 174
   Manage Podcasts ..................................................... 178
   Create Podcast Stations ............................................ 181
   Sync Podcasts .......................................................... 182
Sync Media to Your iOS Device or iPod ..................... 183
  What to Sync to Your iOS Device .................................. 183
  Connect Your Device to Your Mac ................................ 185
  Sync Your Content ....................................................... 187
  Squeeze as Much Music as Possible on an iOS Device ........ 191
  Sync Multiple iOS Devices with the Same Computer .......... 193
  Put Music on an Apple Watch ........................................ 194
  Sync an Apple TV .......................................................... 196

Rip, Burn, and Print .................................................. 197
  How to Rip CDs ............................................................. 197
  Compression Formats for Ripping CDs .............................. 198
  Bit Rates for Ripping CDs ................................................ 202
  Other Important Settings for Ripping CDs ......................... 205
  How to Rip a Music CD ................................................... 205
  How to Rip an Audiobook CD ........................................... 207
  Convert Audio Files to a Different Format ......................... 214
  Rip Just the Music from a Concert DVD ............................ 215
  Burn Music CDs ............................................................. 216
  Print from the Music App ................................................ 217

Extend the Music and TV Apps with AppleScripts ..... 219
  Introducing AppleScripts ................................................. 219
  Where to Find AppleScripts ............................................. 220
  What You Can Do with AppleScripts .................................. 220

Learn More .............................................................. 223

About This Book............................................................ 224
  Ebook Extras .................................................................. 224
  About the Author ........................................................... 225
  About the Publisher ......................................................... 227

Copyright and Fine Print .......................................... 228

Rogue Amoeba Coupon ............................................ 229
Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of macOS Media Apps*, version 1.1, published in January 2020 by alt concepts inc. This book was written by Kirk McElhearn and edited by Joe Kissell.

This book shows you how to manage audio, video, podcasts, and audiobooks on a Mac and in Apple’s cloud; stream tunes from Apple Music; and sync content to your iOS devices.

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All blue text in this book is hot, meaning you can click (or tap) it, just like a link on the web. Some links take you to a webpage. Others go to a different part of the book. If you click a link that takes you to a different part of the book, you can return quickly to the previous spot if your ebook reader offers a “back” feature. For example, in Books, click the “Back to” link at the lower left. Or, in Preview on a Mac, choose Go > Back or press ⌘-[.

What’s New in This Book

This book is the latest installment in a long line of Take Control books about Apple’s media apps. In September 2010, the first edition, Take Control of iTunes 10: The FAQ was released, covering that version of iTunes in detail. This was the first, and only, Take Control book in question-and-answer form, which seemed like a good way to approach the topic.

Over the years, this book has been revised numerous times, including new versions to cover iTunes 11 and iTunes 12. Unlike Apple’s operating systems, iTunes did not have annual updates. iTunes 11 was released in November, 2012, and iTunes 12 in October 2014. During the five years between the first release of iTunes 12 and the present, Apple released a number of dot releases: iTunes 12.1 through iTunes 12.9, with each incremental update adding new features.

With the demise of the iTunes app on the Mac, and the split into four separate apps, with some features in the Finder (see What’s New in Apple’s Media Apps), we felt it was time to refresh this book completely. Here are the main changes between this edition and the last of our books to bear the iTunes name:

- While the question-and-answer structure this book has used for nine years was an interesting approach, it seemed time to move on and turn it into a more standard narrative. The FAQ approach
allowed me to be a bit snarky at times in answering my own ques-
tions, so this new edition comes with 15% less snark.

• Gone are the clever one-word chapter titles (Play, Rip, View, etc.),
replaced by titles that make the table of contents more explicit. I
hope this makes the book easier to scan when you’re looking for
answers.

• The overall structure of the book is quite different, with content
from various chapters re-organized to make more sense. For exam-
ple, in Take Control of iTunes 12: The FAQ, there was a Search
chapter; now the content about searching is in the Play Music
chapter, where it is more useful.

• When Take Control of iTunes 10: The FAQ was released, there were
actions Mac users performed that were not commonplace. For
example, Control-clicking or right-clicking was something that,
while not entirely new to the Mac, many users weren’t familiar with.
As such, there were often detailed explanations of how to carry out
certain operations. In many cases, I have slimmed these down, as
Mac users’ experience has deepened.

• At 260 pages, Take Control of iTunes 12: The FAQ was longer than I
liked, and I have trimmed a lot of content throughout the book. A
lot of the trimming, however, was not done just to pare back the
page count, but because features were removed from the apps I
discuss. I pruned about 30 pages by removing features that were
effaced.

• As expected, this new edition looks at the four different apps that
descend from iTunes—plus syncing in the Finder—so chapters are
organized to focus on each app. This said, as with all the previous
editions, a large share of the book focuses on the Music app, be-
cause that’s what most people are likely to use most.

• Finally, just about every section of the book has been rewritten, with
the exception of that regarding ripping CDs. That element of the
Music app has barely changed, and is unlikely to ever do so.
So this is essentially a new book, based on content that has accrued over a number of previous editions over nine years. If you have read the iTunes books that preceded this one, you’ll find some echos, and you’ll even see some of the same music used in my examples, but approach it as if it’s the first time you’re seeing it, because with these new apps changing the way we work with media on Macs, we need to rethink a lot of our habits.

## What’s New Version 1.1

Version 1.1 of this book contains changes made mainly to the Music and TV apps shortly after their initial release:

- **Column Browser:** When Apple released the new Music app, it was missing a feature that had been in iTunes from the very first version, which is ideal for navigating large libraries: the column browser. Apple responded to the many users who lamented the loss of this feature, and restored it in December 2019. I discuss the Column Browser in View Your Music Library.

- **Multiple libraries in the Music app:** I have added some information about creating and using multiple libraries in the Music app. For a long time, you could create multiple libraries, but all your libraries would still inherit the preferences set in iTunes. Now, in the Music app, each library uses separate preferences, notably that to sync your library to the cloud. See Create More than One Music Library on Your Mac.

- **Navigation from the keyboard:** I have added a couple of tips for navigating different views in the Music app. See View Your Music Library to find out how to quickly move down a list of artists, composers, songs, or albums.

- **Using an Audible account in the Books app:** I have added information about authorizing an Audible account to listen to audiobooks in the Books app. See Listen to Audiobooks.
Introduction

We are now living in a post-iTunes age.

iTunes was introduced in 2001, based on SoundJam, an early Mac MP3 player app that Apple acquired. In the beginning, it was a fairly simple app. It allowed users to organize, browse, and play their music collections. It could rip, play, and burn CDs; and it could play MP3 files and sync those music files to a handful of MP3 players. But the only digital media files we had 18 years ago were music files: we didn’t have videos, podcasts, or ebooks, though Apple added audiobook support to iTunes in 2002.

A lot changed over the years. As new digital media types became common, iTunes became a media center that organized, played, and synced not only music files (in several formats), but also videos, audiobooks, ebooks, podcasts, apps, ringtones, and voice memos. And along the way, Apple introduced Apple Music, the company’s streaming service that offers access to more than 50 million tracks.

With the release of macOS Catalina, Apple made the biggest change ever to The App Formerly Known as iTunes. There are now four apps, each named for the types of content they manage: Music, Podcasts, TV, and Books. (And the iTunes features for syncing iOS devices and iPods have been moved to the Finder.) As a result of this, the way you manage your media files has changed dramatically. Not just because you need to use up to four apps whereas in the past you only needed one, but also because these apps store their media files in four different locations. If you have a large media library, this can complicate the storage, management, and backup of those files.

I’ve long been a serious music fan, and I’ve amassed a music collection that contains more than 100,000 tracks, made up of thousands of CDs I’ve ripped and thousands of tracks I’ve purchased from the iTunes Store and other sources. I’m a big listener of classical music (more than half of my library), and one of my special loves is German art songs, or lieder. But I’m also a Deadhead (a fan of the Grateful Dead)
and have hundreds of recordings of their live concerts. I like jazz, pro-
gressive rock, ambient music, vintage punk rock, and much more. I’m
learning to play the shakuhachi (a Japanese end-blown flute) and have
many recordings made with that instrument. I also regularly listen to
audiobooks and podcasts, and I enjoy listening to audio recordings of
Shakespeare’s plays. And I have a substantial video library, containing
movies, TV shows, and music videos.

I currently own two Macs, an iPhone, two iPads, several iPods (remem-
ber them?), an Apple Watch, and an Apple TV. Over time, I have
confronted the many hurdles that make using digital content on these
devices a challenge.

In this book, I share much of what I’ve learned about managing media
on a Mac. The wide range of music that I listen to, and the variety of
content in my music library, has led me to discover the most practical
and efficient solutions to the problems of ripping, tagging, organizing,
managing, playing, and syncing a large media library.

There are several aspects of these media management apps that I don’t
deal with. I mention only briefly apps used to play digital content on
iOS devices, such as Apple’s Music app. I discuss syncing in order to
show you how to put media—music, video, and audiobooks—on
Apple’s iOS devices, but I don’t cover syncing other types of data, such
as contacts, calendars, and photos.

If you’ve ever been frustrated while trying to efficiently manage media
files on your Mac, read on.

 Compatibility: This book focuses on using Apple’s media manage-
ment apps on macOS 10.15 Catalina. If you are using a Mac running
a previous version of macOS, and want to learn how to use iTunes
12, you can learn how to download a copy of my earlier book Take
Control of iTunes 12: The FAQ in this blog post.
Quick Start

This Quick Start describes what you can learn in each chapter. You can go to the beginning of any chapter to view a list of that chapter’s specific topics. Click (or tap!) any chapter title to jump to the content.

**Discover Apple’s new media apps:**
- To get an overview of the change from iTunes to four separate apps, What’s New in Apple’s Media Apps.

**Play music:**
- Learn how to find and play and music in the new Music app in Play Music.
- Explore the features in Apple Music, including on-demand streaming, music discovery, curated playlists, and recommendations, plus a live radio station. See Stream Apple Music.
- There are a number of ways you can view your music library: by album, artist, genre, songs, and more. See View Your Music and Other Content.

**Learn how to use the cloud and the iTunes Store:**
- Apple’s Cloud Music Library lets you store music you own and music you’ve added to your library from Apple Music in the cloud. See Store Your Music Library in the Cloud.
- You can use the iTunes Store to add music, videos, and more to your media library, and you can add content you own to the Music, TV, and Books apps. See Use the iTunes Store.

**Tag media and organize your files:**
- Tagging media files, or adding metadata to them, is the most important thing you can do to take control of your Music and TV libraries. I’ll show you which tags you can change, how to change them for single and multiple items, and more. Read Tag Your Music Files.
• Playlists let you organize your music so you can do more than play songs by album, or at random. See Organize Your Music and Create Playlists.

• The various media apps store files in different locations, and you may need to change the locations for some of these files if you have a large library. You can also share your Music and TV content over your home network. See Manage and Share Media Files.

• Learn the best ways to import music and audiobook CDs, how to burn CDs, and how to print from the Music app. See Rip, Burn, and Print.

Enjoy audiobooks, movies, TV shows, and podcasts:

• You now store and play audiobooks in the Books app. See Listen to Audiobooks.

• Movies and TV shows are now handled by the TV app. Read about managing a video library and viewing videos on your Mac. See Watch Movies and TV Shows in the TV App.

• Podcasts also have their own app now, and, as with audiobooks, you may need special strategies to manage a large library if you want to save podcast episodes. See Listen to and Watch Podcasts.

Sync media to an iPhone, iPad, or iPod:

• You can, of course, still sync media to your portable devices, but you now manage this process in the Finder. See Sync Media to Your iOS Device or iPod.

Extend Music and TV with AppleScripts:

• You can do a lot with the Music and TV apps, but you may want to go even further. Take advantage of AppleScripts to extend these apps’ functionality. See Extend the Music and TV Apps with Apple-Scripts.
What’s New in Apple’s Media Apps

In 2019, Apple made the biggest change to *The App Formerly Known as iTunes* since its inception in 2001. Instead of grafting new features onto iTunes and perpetuating what many users saw as “bloat,” the company split the app into four media-specific apps:

- **Music:** This app, which retains the core features of iTunes, manages both a local music library and a library in the cloud. And it lets users stream more than 50 million tracks from Apple Music. The Music app can also store and play music videos.

- **TV:** Inheriting the video management features from iTunes, the TV app lets users manage a local movie and TV show library, as well as providing storage for home videos (these can be videos of your family, as well as rips of DVDs you own). In addition, it is the gateway to Apple’s large offering of movies that you can buy or rent from the iTunes Store and Apple TV+, Apple’s forthcoming streaming service, which will offer original content starting in late 2019.

- **Podcasts:** Just as iTunes managed podcasts, allowing you to find, subscribe to, download, and listen to episodes of your favorite podcasts, the Podcasts app does this, and nothing more.

- **Books:** The Books app, which has existed for a few years to manage ebooks, has expanded its scope, and now manages audiobooks, which had previously been the purview of iTunes.

In addition to these four new apps, the iTunes features for backing up and syncing iOS devices and iPods are now available in the Finder.

The interfaces of these apps have been simplified, though there are two distinct styles of interface. The Music app is fairly minimalist, with all navigation done from the sidebar, whereas iTunes 12 required a combination of the sidebar, the Media Picker (a pop-up menu above
the sidebar), and a series of tabs at the top-center of the window, to navigate different types of content. The Podcasts app presents a similar stripped-down look, but the TV and Books app have tabs at the tops of their windows to allow you to navigate between local content and that from the iTunes Store.

For while the iTunes name is gone on the Mac desktop, the iTunes Store still exists, and is broken up into content-specific stores in each app (with the exception of the Podcasts app, which features a podcast directory, but doesn’t call it part of the iTunes Store). And the iTunes Store is not going anywhere soon, for two reasons. First, because Apple has a lot of content to sell you; and, second, because Windows users are not seeing this split into four apps. For them, iTunes continues to function as before, and Apple has not said whether they are bringing these new apps to that platform.

Much of this book discusses the Music app, and you’ll notice changes to the way you view your content. For example, the various ways you view your music have been simplified (and in some cases dumbed down). While Apple has made some excellent choices to simplify the Music app, some users may not find all these changes to their liking.

As a result of these changes, managing media on your Mac has become either a bit simpler or a bit more complex, depending on how many media kinds you have in your library. If you only stored music in iTunes, then the new Music app is a “light” version of its predecessor. If, however, you used all of these media kinds in the past, you may find that you have to faff around a bit more, rather than finding all your media in one app: iTunes.
Play Music

Playing music is simple, but there are some useful features that let you mix your music up, run it on repeat, and make it sound better. In this chapter, I look at the Music app, and explain the various ways you can play music: songs, albums, playlists, and even CDs.

Note that to use some of the features I describe in this and subsequent chapters, you will need to be signed into an iTunes Store account. I discuss this in About Your iTunes Store Account.

Play Your Music

The Music app’s sidebar has three distinct sections where you can start playing music: Apple Music, Library, and Playlists. You may use one or all of these depending on how you find and launch the music you want to hear. You play music in any of these sections by clicking a Play button, which may be on an album (hover your pointer over an album’s artwork to display it; Figure 1), or by clicking a Play button above a playlist. You can also click the Play icon in the app header at the top of the Music window. Whenever you start playing music, the Play button in the app header becomes a Pause icon that you can click to stop playing.
Figure 1: When you hover your pointer over an album, a blue and white Play ► button appears, as you can see above on the album *Another Green World*. Click it to play the album.

**Hide Apple Music**

If you don’t have an Apple Music account, and don’t want to use the service, you don’t have to, but the Music app will continue to show Apple Music in the sidebar, in the hopes of tempting you to the siren call of streaming. You can, however, hide this. Go to Music > Preferences, click Restrictions, then, in the Disable section, check Apple Music. You’ll see there that you can also hide the iTunes Store if you like. But note that if you hide the iTunes Store first, then Apple Music is also disabled.

To skip ahead one track, click the Next ► icon; to skip back, click the Previous ◀ icon. To scrub (skip) ahead or back within a track, press and hold one of these icons or drag the playhead in the app header. And to change the volume, drag the volume slider in the app header.
The world of music has changed in recent years. People are slowly shifting from owning their music—buying CDs or downloads—to renting it. With Apple Music and other streaming services, you can now access tens of millions of tracks for $10 a month. While not every artist or label’s music can be streamed, you can access most of what you want to hear. But is this the best way to spend your music budget? Some people—myself included—still buy CDs and still want to own music and listen on our own terms.

While much of what I explained about playing music in the previous chapter also applies to Apple Music, in this chapter, I look at Apple Music and explain how it works, plus how you can find great music and help Apple Music recommend new music for you to discover.

Note: Although Apple’s older iTunes Match service does stream music, I discuss it later in the Store Your Music Library in the Cloud chapter.

Discover Apple Music

Apple Music is Apple’s streaming music service, which combines several features:

- **Music streaming:** You can stream more than 50 million tracks from the Apple Music Library. Much of the music that’s for sale in the iTunes Store is in this library, but not all. You can stream tracks on demand, such as a song or album, or you can stream playlists curated by Apple Music editors and contributors. See Stream Apple Music.

- **Cloud storage:** You can store up to 100,000 tracks in your Cloud Music Library. If you enable cloud sync of your music library, the Music app checks each track in your library to see whether it can...
“match” a track that’s already in the Apple Music Library. If a track doesn’t match, it’s uploaded. These tracks show in your Cloud Music Library along with tracks you’ve purchased from the iTunes Store and those you’ve downloaded from Apple Music. See Use Cloud Music Library.

**Note:** Apple has changed some terminology regarding the cloud. See the sidebar What’s in a Name? Cloud Music Library later in the book for an explanation of this change.

- **For You music recommendations:** With 50 million tracks to choose from, you can have that kid-in-a-candy-store feeling, where you want to stream everything but don’t know where to start. Apple Music’s For You feature can help you choose what to listen to. See Personalize Apple Music.

- **Radio:** Beats 1 is the marquee streaming radio station on Apple Music, but there are a few dozen others. You can also create an Apple Music Radio station from any song, artist, or genre. See Listen to Apple Music Radio.

An individual subscription costs $9.99 per month, and a family plan, available to groups using Apple’s Family Sharing, costs $14.99 per month for up to six people. If you subscribe or renew an individual plan for one year, it’s only $99, saving you the cost of two months, but there is no discounted annual membership for those with family plans. A half-price student subscription is also available, after you have submitted proof that you are a student. (Prices are different outside the United States.)

If you don’t subscribe, you can access a subset of Apple Music features.
Now that you have a substantial music library, you need to choose the right way to view your music so you can find what you want to listen to. In this chapter, I’ll show you various ways to view your music.

**Use the Sidebar**

The Music sidebar, which displays at the left of the app’s window (Figure 30), helps you navigate your music library. It lets you view your music in different ways.

*Figure 30: The sidebar lets you access your music in different ways.*
The sidebar has four or five sections, by default, depending on how you interact with Apple’s commercial offerings:

- **Search**: The search field is at the top of the sidebar, and cannot be hidden. I discuss searching your music library, Apple Music, and the iTunes Store in Search for Music.

- **Apple Music**: If you have an Apple Music subscription, you can use the three elements of the Apple Music section of the sidebar to access For You recommendations, Browse Apple Music content, and listen to Apple Music Radio. If you don’t have an Apple Music subscription, this is still visible; Apple wants to tempt you to sign up. To hide this, choose Music > Preferences, click Restrictions, and disable Apple Music. I discuss Apple Music in Stream Apple Music.

- **Library**: This is your music library, which contains local tracks and those in your Cloud Music Library, if you are using that feature. If you have shared libraries on your network, you can click the Library header to choose those libraries. See Share Your Music and TV Libraries over a Network for more on using Home Sharing.

- **iTunes Store**: If you are signed into an Apple Music account, this is hidden by default; if not, you will see it. You can show or hide it by choosing Music > Preferences, and selecting or deselecting iTunes Store in the Show section. I look at the iTunes Store in Use the iTunes Store.

- **Playlists**: You may have playlists for your local music, or you may have created or saved Apple Music playlists. If so, a Playlists section displays in the sidebar. I explain how to create playlists in On Playlists.

**Customize the Sidebar**

As mentioned above, you can show and hide two elements of the sidebar in Music’s preferences: Apple Music and the iTunes Store. But you can also choose what to display in the Library section, and you can hide the Playlists section as well.
Store Your Music Library in the Cloud

Your music library can be on your Mac, or it can be in the cloud, using Cloud Music Library. The Music app blurs the distinction between the two, because it can upload your own music to the cloud, and you can also add music from Apple Music to your library. While you aren’t required to use the cloud for your music library, it’s a powerful tool that allows you to have a huge music library accessible on all your devices. (Provided you have the bandwidth and data allowance to access it.)

This chapter looks at the two major aspects of cloud-based Music use: Cloud Music Library and iTunes Match. Cloud Music Library works in conjunction with Apple Music to provide a cloud music library of up to 100,000 tracks that you can access from any computer running the Music app or any iOS device. And the iTunes Store keeps your purchased content in the cloud, so you can stream or re-download it at any time.

**Note:** In the previous chapter, Stream Apple Music, I looked at Apple’s streaming music service. Although some of those sections touched on cloud-based aspects of Apple Music, this chapter has detailed information about Cloud Music Library. Note also Apple’s change in terminology: previously, this was called iCloud Music Library; now it is just Cloud Music Library.

Manage Music and the Cloud

In recent years, Apple has expanded its cloud-based media offerings, and, while you can certainly use the Music app without every accessing the cloud, many of its features depend on Apple’s data centers.
Here’s a quick look at the current options for digital media:

- **Cloud Music Library:** Available to Apple Music and iTunes Match subscribers, Cloud Music Library commingles tracks from the following sources, making them available on all computers and mobile devices that are signed in to the same iTunes Store account:
  - Tracks in your Music library that didn’t come from Apple, such as tracks from CDs you’ve ripped, that are uploaded or matched through an iTunes Match or Apple Music subscription
  - Music you’ve added from Apple Music, as long as you maintain your Apple Music subscription
  - Music you’ve purchased from the iTunes Store

  Before you start iTunes Match or turn on Cloud Music Library, read Before You Turn On Cloud Music Library.

- **Apple Music:** This is the streaming arm of Apple’s cloud music offering. Without a subscription, you can listen to Beats 1 and other live radio stations. Subscribers can listen to Apple Music Radio, gain access to the 50 million tracks in the Apple Music Library, get For You recommendations, and can turn on Cloud Music Library. See Discover Apple Music to learn how to use this service.

- **iTunes Match:** With iTunes Match, you use Cloud Music Library to store your music library in the cloud. The tunes that you store and access are only those from your library; you can’t access the Apple Music Library. Because iTunes Match is a subset of Apple Music, if you’ve subscribed to Apple Music, you won’t see an iTunes Match option. See Use iTunes Match for more.

- **Automatic downloads from the iTunes Store:** This feature has been around for a few years, so even though it’s cloud-based, you may not think of it that way. It lets you download a new iTunes Store purchase to more than one computer or device automatically. See Automatically Download Purchases to the Music App.
Use the iTunes Store

The iTunes Store sells music in the Music app, movies and TV shows in the TV app, and ebooks and audiobooks in the Books app. It also offers movie rentals, and podcasts are technically supplied by the iTunes Store, even though Mac and iOS users don’t see an actual storefront when using the Podcasts app. In other countries, the content available varies, but music is sold in all countries where the iTunes Store is present.

In this chapter, I look at using the U.S. iTunes Store. I also explain how to move digital content you’ve purchased elsewhere into Music, in Add Your Own Files Own to the Music App.

About Your iTunes Store Account

Everyone who has an Apple ID has an associated iTunes Store account. You use this Apple ID to purchase or rent items from Apple’s various stores, which are still considered part of the iTunes Store, but also for the Mac App Store, iOS App Store, the Books Store, and other Apple services.

You will need to be signed into your iTunes Store account to use some of the features I describe in this book. In most cases, the Music, TV, Podcasts, or Books app will prompt you to sign into your iTunes Store account when you first try to access such features, but, if not, you can do so by choosing Account > Sign In Music, TV, or Podcasts, and Store > Sign In in Books. You can also access your Apple ID settings in the Apple ID pane of System Preferences.

For more on what your Apple ID is used for, see the Apple support document, Manage and use your Apple ID.
Shop in the iTunes Store

With the new Music app, Apple has segregated users into two groups. If you have an Apple Music account, you will not see the iTunes Store in the app’s sidebar by default. If you don’t subscribe to Apple Music, you will see the iTunes Store, but you’ll also see the Apple Music section in the sidebar.

You can change both of these. If you are an Apple Music user and do want to see the iTunes Store—many people both rent and buy music—go to Music > Preferences, click General, and select iTunes Store in the Show section. Note that while you can browse the iTunes Store at any time, you must be signed into your iTunes Store account to purchase or rent any content, or download any free content. See About Your iTunes Store Account above for more on signing into your iTunes Store account.

If you don’t have an Apple Music account and want to hide the Apple Music entries in the sidebar, go to Music > Preferences > Restrictions and then, in the Disable section, select Apple Music. While you’re there, you can also disable the iTunes Store, if you don’t want to use either of these. Disabling the iTunes Store also disables Apple Music.

Click iTunes Store in the sidebar to enter the store. You’ll see what Apple is currently touting, with new music, discounted offers, pre-orders, and more. You can navigate the store by genre (there are lots of navigation links in the right-hand sidebar), look at the top albums and songs (also in the right-hand sidebar), and browse in other ways. To learn more about an item, or to buy it, click it to open its page.

When viewing an album’s page (Figure 47), you can preview a track by hovering over its track number and clicking, or you can preview the entire album by clicking “Preview All” beneath the track list. And if you have an Apple Music subscription, and the album is available to stream, a banner at the top of the page allows you to click a button to listen to the album on Apple Music, and the price buttons will say Play, allowing you to play tracks directly.
Tag Your Music Files

Tagging media files is the most important thing you can do to take control of your Music library. You could add all your music to your library and play it at random, but without correct tags, you’d never find what you want, and you wouldn’t be able to make smart playlists. To correctly organize your music, tagging is essential.

In this chapter, I’ll show you which tags you can change, how to change them for single and multiple items, and how to streamline tagging so you can easily organize your library. Note that the information in this chapter also applies to video files in the TV app, but you can no longer change tags for podcasts in the new Podcasts app, or for audiobooks in the Books app.

Understanding Tags

In order for the Music app to keep track of your media files, and for you to know which ones to play, every item in your Music library has tags. Tags are metadata—information about the files and their content—that helps Music sort tracks and keep albums together, and more.

**Note:** Tags are part of the ID3 specification for storing metadata in music files, and are also used in other types of files, such as videos and ebooks. ID3.org has information about the history of tags, and which tags are available for music files. Note that the Music app only uses some of the available ID3 tags.

At a minimum, for a song, you need tags specifying a song name, artist, and album name. But you can add other tags: composer, year, genre, track number, disc number, and more. You can also add comments, lyrics, and album artwork.
To see tags for any item, select it and press ⌘-I. Here’s a list of the main tags for music, audiobooks, and videos, and what they commonly contain:

• **Name:** This could be a song name, the name of a movement in a symphony, a section of a movie soundtrack, and so on.

• **Artist:** This is the person or group who recorded the music.

• **Album:** The name of the album on which the track appears.

• **Album Artist:** Say you have a record by U2 with a song featuring Luciano Pavarotti. The artist tag would mention both of these artists, but the Album Artist tag would contain only U2, because the song is on a U2 album. This tag helps you sort music correctly by album, yet list additional artists on specific tracks.

• **Composer:** This is the composer of the music, whether a classical composer or a songwriter.

• **Grouping:** Some music from the iTunes Store—usually classical music—has this tag. For example, an album that has three piano concertos by Mozart will have a single name for the album, but the individual works’ names may be entered in the Grouping tag. You can sort files by grouping in Songs view, and you can use this tag with smart playlists.

• **Genre:** You can pick from a number of preset genres, or you can add your own by typing one in this field. I’ve found that the Genre tag is a great way to organize my music. Since it’s easier to look at genres that contain less music, I’ve created plenty of nonstandard genres. For example, I have genres for Dylan (Bob Dylan, and his recordings with The Band), Dead (The Grateful Dead, and its members’ solo recordings), Lieder (German art songs), and Chamber Music (string quartets, violin sonatas, etc.).

Another way to set up fine-grained genres is to use multiple words, like Classical: Opera, or Blues: Electric. You’ll have all your genres grouped by the first word, with the sub-genre visible after it.

• **Year:** The year the music was recorded, performed, or released.
Organize Your Music and Create Playlists

You’ve got your favorite music in your library, but you’d like to organize it better. In this chapter, I’ll show you how to make playlists, the key to setting up your listening sessions. I’ll look at using tags to create smart playlists automatically with your favorite tunes. I also cover some special topics that will help you with tasks like finding your media files on your disk, managing a large music library, and finding duplicates.

On Playlists

You can listen to your music by album, or by selecting song after song. You can play all the music by a specific artist, or you can shuffle your entire library. But the Music app reveals its biggest strength when you make playlists.

A playlist is a list of songs that you play together, one after the other, with a first song and a last song. Pretty basic; kind of like a CD.

But playlists are more than that. A playlist is a self-contained unit, one with a bunch of tracks you can always play in order or in shuffle mode; a group of songs that you can listen to while dining or when chilling outside; or your favorite lively songs to listen to when you work out.

A playlist can be the equivalent of an album, a double-album set, a live concert, or an opera. It can be a compilation of favorite songs by different groups, or a selection of music for a special occasion. It can even contain all your songs, if you want. With smart playlists, you can create endless playlists that keep adding music as you listen. And a playlist can also include videos from Apple Music.
Let’s distinguish between two types of playlists:

- **Standard**: Standard playlists are groups of songs that you organize manually. The key word here is *manually*: as you’ll see ahead, smart playlists are *automatically* created from rules you select, but standard playlists require that you choose every track they contain, and their play order. Standard playlists are also static; they don’t change as you play them, unless you intervene or play them in shuffle mode.

- **Smart**: Smart playlists are dynamic. You choose rules, and Music scans your library for files that match these rules, based on the tags your files contain. (Hence the importance of tagging your media correctly.) In essence, the rules in a smart playlist tell Music to search your library for items that match them.

### Create a Standard Playlist

You create a standard playlist by choosing File > New > Playlist, or pressing ⌘-N. Music adds the playlist to the sidebar, and highlights its name. By default, Music names the new playlist *Playlist* (or, if that name exists, *Playlist 2*, and so on). Type a name for the playlist, and then press Return to save the name.

It is possible to create multiple playlists with the same name, but try to give your playlists unique names so you can tell them apart. To later change the name of a playlist, find it in the Playlists sidebar, click it, wait a moment, click it again, and type a new name.

Select the new playlist in the sidebar to work with it (Figure 56).
Manage and Share Media Files

One of the advantages of apps such as Music, TV, Podcasts, and Books is that you don’t need to think about files. When you add files to these apps’ libraries, they are stored on your Mac in specific locations. Most people can work with these files without ever going into the Finder. However, if you have a large media library, you may need to consider offloading your files.

In this chapter, I discuss how you can manage large media libraries, and also how to share your music over a network to other devices.

How the Media Apps Organize Files

A useful aspect of the Music and TV apps is that they free you from having to worry about organizing the actual files it manages. When you add a file to Music or TV, the app stores a pointer to its location, so all you need to think about is whether you want to play the file, and how you sync it to your iOS device (if you still sync music and don’t use the cloud).

Music App File Organization

By default, Music stores your files in a Media folder. When you download files from the iTunes Store, they go there automatically; when you rip CDs the same thing occurs. When you add files to your music library from your drive, assuming you’ve left the “Copy files...” checkbox enabled (it’s described just ahead), Music copies them from their original location, and you can delete the originals.
Where Are All Those Files?

With the new media apps, there are new locations for the storage of media files. However, if you upgrade from an existing installation rather than do a clean install of macOS Catalina, your music and video files will not be moved. You’ll find them, and other support files, in ~/Music/Music/iTunes Media. Your library files will, however, be in ~/Music/Music/ and ~/Movies/TV. This can be a bit confusing.

If you do a clean install, music and TV files will be located as follows:

✦ Music stores its files in the Music subfolder of your home folder. The default location of your Media folder is ~/Music/Music/Media/, where ~ is a shortcut for your home folder.
✦ The TV app stores file in ~/Movies/TV/Media.

For the other two media kinds—podcasts and audiobooks—the paths are a bit more complex. These folder are “hidden,” in the sense that you are not expected to access them, regardless of how you install or upgrade to macOS Catalina.

Podcasts are stored in a cache folder in ~/Library/Group Containers/243LU875E5.groups.com.apple.podcasts. (I don’t know what 243LU875E5 means, but that prefix seems to be used on all Macs.)

Since Apple spun off the Books app, ebooks have been stored in a folder in your Library folder: ~/Library/com.apple.BKAgentService. Audiobooks are also stored there now.

One problem with audiobooks is the space they take up. If you have a large audiobook library, you may not have room on your startup drive, especially if it’s an SSD. So you might want to remove as many audiobooks as possible and store them somewhere else, if you’re not planning to listen to them soon.

If you have a large media library and already store your media files on an external drive, when you upgrade macOS Catalina, both the Music and Apple TV apps will remember the location of your existing media, if you are using a different folder than the default. The Music and TV apps each have an Advanced preference allowing you to choose a location for its media folder. This means that you can store your music on one volume and your movies and TV shows on another volume, which can be practical for many people with large libraries.
Listen to Audiobooks

When Apple introduced the Books app in Mac OS X 10.9 Mavericks, it took over the management of ebooks from iTunes. A standalone Books app on iOS mirrored its features, and now Apple has also added audiobooks to the Books app on both platforms.

The Books app lets you listen to audiobooks, whether you’ve purchased them from the Books Store or from Audible, or ripped your own audiobook CDs. (See How to Rip an Audiobook CD for special information about ripping audiobook CDs.)

Play Audiobooks

Listening to an audiobook is similar to listening to music, with two small differences. The first is that when you listen to an audiobook, you want to pick it up again later where you last paused. The Books app manages this, so if you listen to a chapter on your Mac, you can come back the next day and immediately begin with the next chapter. It stores your precise location, so you can stop and restart your audiobook at any time.

Not only does Books remember where you stopped listening to an audiobook, but it also syncs this location to your iOS device. And when you listen on a portable device, Music finds the last location there and syncs it back as well. So you can listen to an audiobook on an iPhone, then sync and pick up at your last location on your computer. Sync again before you go out, and you can continue on your iPhone.

Another specific feature of audiobooks is that many of them are chaptered, and when you play a chaptered audiobook, a Chapters menu appears at the bottom of the Books app next to the play controls. If you click the Up Next icon (see Figure 65), you can view your location in the book, click a chapter to start playing at that location, and see the amount of time remaining in the book.
Figure 65: The Chapters menu in the Books app lets you choose a location in an audiobook.

Since Books stores your location when you stop listening to audiobooks, you may not use the Chapters menu often. It would be practical for, say, a book of essays or short stories, but in my experience, very few audiobooks have named chapters that help you navigate efficiently.

Note: The first time you play an audiobook from Audible, the Books app asks you to authorize it by entering your Audible user name and password. If it doesn’t, you can authorize the app by choosing Store > Authorizations > Authorize Audible Account. And you may need to sign into your iTunes Store account in the Books app. You can manage your iTunes Store authorization from the Store > Authorizations submenu.

Playback Options

If you click the More icon next to the play controls, you’ll see a number of playback options in a contextual menu:

• **Skip Chapters:** Choose Next Chapter to skip ahead to the beginning of the next chapter, or Previous Chapter to go back to the beginning of the current chapter, or to the beginning of the previous chapter, if you’re already at the beginning of a chapter.
Watch Movies and TV Shows in the TV App

The new TV app replaces the Movies, TV Shows, and Home Movies libraries that were in iTunes, and corresponds to its equivalent apps on iOS and on the Apple TV. You can use it to buy and rent movies and TV shows, and view video content from your own library.

For many people, the TV app will be nothing more than a conduit to access videos streamed from different services: Apple’s iTunes Store offerings, of course, and it’s Apple TV+ service, due to launch in late 2019, but also a number of channels accessible via the TV app, such as HBO, Showtime, and Starz. The comparable TV app on the Apple TV offers more content, through apps that can be downloaded to that device.

Browse Content in the TV App

The TV app has five tabs at the top of the window: Watch Now, Movies, TV Shows, Kids, and Library. (Figure 66)
Here is what these tabs present:

- **Watch Now:** This tab shows a poster frame of the last movie or TV show episode you’ve watched, along with an Up Next list below it, showing content that you have recently added to your library, or that you have started watching and not finished.

- **Movies:** Here you can find movies available to purchase or rent from Apple’s offering, as well as from channels that you can subscribe to.

- **TV Shows:** This tab presents TV shows available to purchase or rent.

- **Kids:** This tab shows content appropriate for children, though not sorted by age.

- **Library:** Here you can access movies, TV shows, and home movies that you have purchased from Apple, or that you have added to your library manually. The Library view contains a sidebar which lets you access your library by type of content, genre, and in playlists. (Figure 67)
Listen to and Watch Podcasts

In the post-iTunes world, podcasts have their own eponymous app. The new Podcasts app is similar to that on iOS and on Apple TV, and you can use it to listen to individual podcast episodes and subscribe to your favorite podcasts. However, you no longer have direct access to podcast files, so if you kept an archive of your favorites, you’ll need to rethink your strategy.

Find Podcasts

To find podcasts to listen to, click Browse in the sidebar. You’ll see an interface similar to that of the iTunes Store, with some featured podcasts at the top of the window, and other popular podcasts below. Scroll down to the Categories section, and click a category to see what’s available. Or use the search field to find podcasts that match specific keywords.

If aren’t sure what to try, check out The Next Track, shown in Figure 69, a podcast about the way people listen to music today. My co-host Doug Adams and I discuss various types of music, audio equipment, Apple’s media apps, and more.

To view more information about the podcast, click its title or thumbnail.
To stream an episode and listen to it immediately, hover your pointer over an episode and click the Play button that displays to the left of its name. If you click the Info icon on the right side of the app header, you’ll see show notes for the podcast; and if you click the Up Next icon next to that, you’ll see what’s coming up in your podcast queue (if anything).

If want to listen to a podcast regularly, you can simplify the download process by subscribing to it. Click the Subscribe button, and the Podcasts app will download the latest episode. To add other episodes to your library, click the Plus icon; this changes into a Download icon. You can click that to download the episode.

If you scroll down and click See All Episodes, you’ll see all available episodes of the podcast. Unfortunately, there’s no way to add all episodes of a podcast to your library; you’ll need to click the Plus icon for each one.

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Sync Media to Your iOS Device or iPod

If you have an iOS device, you’ll use the Finder to sync your media files to it, along with apps and other information. Since iTunes was split into four apps, it makes more sense to have syncing centralized than to have any or all of those apps control the process. The way you set up your media library reflects how these files become accessible on your portable device.

Syncing offers many options. I want to point out some of the basics, and explain how you can put your favorite media files on your iOS device. As with the rest of this book, my focus here is music, because music syncing is so granular, though I mention other media kinds. Once you grasp the concepts, it’s simple to sync your media to your iOS device exactly the way you want to.

What to Sync to Your iOS Device

Before thinking about what you want to sync, take a minute to consider what you can’t sync through the Finder:

• If you’ve turned on Cloud Music Library, you no longer copy music from your Mac.

• It’s the same with iCloud Photos—if you’ve turned it on, you no longer sync photos through your Mac.

• If you’ve set up Podcasts to sync subscriptions to the cloud, then you also don’t sync them to your device.

• If you’ve turned on iCloud sync for calendars or contacts, you can’t sync that data through the Finder.

Even for items that you can sync, you may wish to transfer them in some other way. For example, on an iPhone, you may prefer to down-
load iTunes Store purchases from the cloud and podcasts can all come over the air. However, you’ll be able to add new content to the device only when it has an internet connection. In the case of a cellular connection, if your data plan is limited or the connection is slow, you may find that you can’t get the items you want when you need them. And, of course, cellular works only for cellular devices, such as an iPhone or an iPad with cellular access.

Another part of thinking about what to sync has to do with your device’s capacity for holding media:

• **Your device has the capacity to hold all your media:** In this case, sync it all; it’ll be much easier for you to not worry about choosing specific items. This may be the case if you have a 160 GB iPod classic, for example (may it rest in peace), or if you have a 256 GB iPhone with enough space for all your music, but also have some video content.

  Unless you really don’t want your videos on the device, then don’t worry, sync everything and be happy.

• **Your device doesn’t have space for all your media:** In this common situation, you need to choose what to sync. Your choice isn’t permanent; you can change what you sync every week, or even every day. You can have certain types of items sync dynamically: for example, you can sync only unwatched TV shows or unplayed podcasts, or only a certain number of them. In this way, your iOS device’s content will change as you watch TV shows or listen to podcasts. You can also use smart playlists to change the music that you sync: for example, you can sync only music you haven’t listened to recently, or only music you’ve bought in the last few months.

Many people fall into the second camp, but generally because of the videos in their TV app’s libraries, not audio. In that situation, you may want to sync all your music, and pay more attention to choosing which, if any, videos you sync to your device.

This said, if you have the bandwidth, and an appropriate cellular plan for when you’re on the go, I recommend using the cloud in lieu of
If you want to add music you own from CDs to the Music app, you can rip, or import, the CD to add the music to your library. You can then listen to it on your computer or sync it to your iOS device. But you can add more than just ripped music: you can rip audiobooks from CDs or add videos from DVDs that you own. I also discuss burning CDs—which is so 2000—and printing from the Music app, which you may actually want to do at some point.

How to Rip CDs

Many music lovers still buy CDs. These plastic discs offer several advantages over digital music: they contain uncompressed music; they have liner notes; and, in some cases, they are cheaper than digital downloads. You can pick up used CDs for a few bucks each, and you can get many excellent box sets of classical music for just a couple of dollars per disc.

Ripping CDs is simple, but you should make some decisions regarding compression format, bit rate, and tagging before you start. If you have a large music library, you’ve probably already made these decisions, but if you’re still building your library, it’s not too late. You can re-rip CDs you’ve ripped in the past, if you decide that you’d rather use a different bit rate. But also consider how much your music library is going to grow. If you have lots of CDs that you haven’t yet ripped, or if you buy a lot of music, plan ahead. Keep reading to find advice on each of these topics.

Note: The following topics on compression formats, bit rates, etc., may seem complex, but the quality of your ripped music depends on them. You’ll need to read these topics only once; after you’ve chosen your settings, you’ll probably never want to change them.
Is Ripping Legal?

If you’re used to ripping CDs, you’d probably never think that it might not be legal to rip them. In the United States, and in many other countries, ripping music is legal as part of the “fair use” doctrine of copyright law, as long as you rip CDs that you own, and the digital files are for your personal use only. You can’t rip a CD, then make mixes and give them to your friends.

Later in this chapter, I’ll talk about ripping DVDs, which, according to current U.S. law, violates the DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act). This is because DVDs are, in most cases, protected by encryption called CSS (Content Scrambling System). Bypassing any such copyright protection system is illegal. (In 2010, exemptions were made to the DMCA for noncommercial copying of short excerpts for the purpose of criticism or comment.)

However, there is a gray area around copying DVDs that you own in order to view their content on an iOS device, laptop, or Apple TV; it’s essentially the same as ripping music to listen to on your iPod. I am not espousing the violation of any law, merely presenting methods that are used to create digital versions of videos on DVDs. It’s up to you to decide how to deal with the legality of the procedure.

Compression Formats for Ripping CDs

Before getting our hands dirty with actual CD rips, I want to discuss compression formats. When you rip a CD with Music, you can either use the default format or choose a different one that suits you. To make this choice, you need to understand a bit about compression. (Skip ahead to How to Rip a Music CD if you don’t care and want to use the default, or if you already know this stuff.)

Compression is a seemingly magical function that reduces the size of digital files. You’ve probably used compressed .zip archives, which allow you to store data in smaller files or to transfer data over a network more effectively. Compression software looks for redundancies in bits of data, especially repeated characters or series of characters, and replaces them with shorter bits of data. You can compress text files to
You can take advantage of AppleScripts to extend the functionality of the Music and TV apps. While looking at AppleScripts in depth would take another book of this length, in this bonus chapter I want to give you a taste of what AppleScripts can do for you, and tell you about some of my favorite AppleScripts.

**Introducing AppleScripts**

AppleScripts are short, simple programs that are much easier to write than full-fledged applications and that let you act on files and metadata in many Apple apps (the Finder, Music, TV, Photos, Safari, Mail, etc.), as well as a number of third-party applications (Microsoft Office, Adobe Creative Suite, etc.) that provide some AppleScript support.

AppleScript support can be limited—supporting a mere handful of commands—to complex. Music and TV offer in-depth scriptability, notably by providing access via AppleScript to the tags in your media files.

When you add AppleScripts to your user folders at `~/Library/Music/Scripts` and `~/Library/Apple TV/Scripts`, they display in Scripts menus respectively in the Music and TV apps, and you can run them by choosing them from those menus. You must create these folders if you want to use AppleScripts. Also note that you may want to use the same scripts with both apps; you must add copies of the script to both folders, in this case.

**Tip:** The `~/Library` folder mentioned in the previous paragraph is normally invisible. To see it, hold down the Option key and choose Go > Library in the Finder.
Where to Find AppleScripts

There are two ways to get AppleScripts. The first is to roll your own, but, to be fair, this requires a good knowledge of programming. While Apple claimed—and still claims—that AppleScript is close to natural language, this isn’t exactly the case.

There’s an easier way to get AppleScripts for the Music and TV apps. Go to the Doug’s AppleScripts website. Run by Doug Adams, AppleScript guru extraordinaire, this site is a compendium of scripts that he has written. There are scripts for managing tracks and track info, working with artwork, dealing with playlists, controlling the Music and TV apps, importing and exporting information about your Music and TV libraries and playlists, managing files, working with libraries, and much more. The site houses hundreds of scripts and a handful of applications that Doug has written.

What You Can Do with AppleScripts

When you see exactly what AppleScripts can do with the Music and TV apps, you may be surprised. I use them most often for tagging files; copying, correcting, truncating or appending track names; searching for and replacing text; finding “missing” tracks in my library; and changing hidden preferences.

But the best way to understand what AppleScripts can do is to look at some concrete examples. Here are my top ten AppleScripts, with links to them on the Doug’s AppleScripts website:

1. Remove n Characters from Front or Back: This script lets you remove extraneous characters from the beginning or end of a tag. You can do this for tags including Name, Album, Artist, and Composer. I use it often for classical music; many Name tags include the name of the composer before the name of the track, in this form: Schubert: Gute Nacht. For an album tagged like that, I remove the first 10 characters, and keep just the name of the track.
Learn More

Here’s a list of some of the most useful websites for learning more about Apple’s media management apps and iOS devices:

- **Kirkville**: This is my personal website. I regularly publish articles about using Apple’s media apps, Macs, iOS devices, as well as articles about my favorite music and more.

- **Apple’s iTunes and iPod support hubs**: These portals to information about iTunes and the various iPod models provide access to technical notes, user’s manuals, and more. (Yes, they still call the page “iTunes Support.”)

- **Apple’s iTunes forums**: Apple’s forums offer a way for users to get troubleshooting help from their peers. You can often find answers to the most obscure questions here.

- **iTunes version history**: This Wikipedia page has a list of iTunes versions and the features added with each one.

- **Audiophile Style**: Although audiophiles can be a bit obsessive, the Audiophile Style website offers useful information about setting up centralized media servers, playing high-resolution audio files, and using high-end audio equipment connected to a computer. There’s also a very active forum where you can discuss using a computer as part of your audio system.
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About the Author

Kirk McElhearn writes about Macs, iOS devices, iTunes, books, music, and more. He contributes to TidBITS and other publications, and records several podcasts. Kirk has written and co-written more than two dozen books about using the Mac, including *Take Control of Audio Hijack*, *Take Control of Scrivener 2*, and *Take Control of LaunchBar*.

Kirk’s website, [Kirkville](#), presents articles on Macs, iOS devices, books, music, and much more. A lapsed New Yorker, Kirk has lived in Europe for more than 35 years; he currently lives in a farmhouse near Stratford-upon-Avon, in the United Kingdom. You can email Kirk at kirk@mcelhearn.com or follow him on Twitter: [@mcelhearn](#).

Acknowledgments

In all the years that I’ve been writing about iTunes—and now its successors—this year saw the biggest change in the apps and their capabilities, requiring a rethink of how to efficiently work with them. Doug Adams was a big help in understanding these changes, and his AppleScripts make the Music and TV apps much easier to use.

Over the years, through the various editions of this book, I’ve worked with a number of fine editors, and this time it was Joe Kissell’s turn to shepherd it to publication. With the many changes to the apps that this book covers, a new strategy was needed, and I thank Joe for being the guiding light and helping shape this new edition.

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The latest edition of this book was written in Nisus Writer Pro on a 4K iMac, with the help of a 13-inch MacBook Pro, an iPad Pro, iPhone XS Max, iPhone 11, Apple Watch, iPod classic, iPod touch, iPod nano, iPod shuffle, a pair of HomePods, an Apple TV, and AirPods. It was produced under the influence of a wonderful selection of Chinese green teas and wulongs, and first flush Darjeelings.

The stereo in my home office, where I do a lot of listening, and where I played the music that accompanied me while writing this book, consists of a Sonos Amp, a Cambridge Audio 651 BD CD player, Q Acoustics 3020i speakers on IsoAcoustic speaker stands on my desk, KEF Q150 speakers in the comfy listening area of my office, and a Wharfedale Diamond SW150 subwoofer. The cables and interconnects cost a few quid each.

The soundtrack for this book included music by Bob Dylan, Brian Eno, Franz Schubert, Chiku Za, the Grateful Dead, Miles Davis, The Clash, The Band, Brad Mehldau, Franz Liszt, The Durutti Column, Okuda Atsuya, Bill Frisell, John Foxx, Iron & Wine, Bill Evans, Harold Budd, The Cure, Miles Davis, Toru Takemitsu, and many others. It’s a delight to be able to write about software that manages music while listening to so much great music.
About the Publisher

alt concepts inc., publisher of Take Control Books, is operated by Joe Kissell and Morgen Jahnke, who acquired the ebook series from TidBITS Publishing Inc.’s owners, Adam and Tonya Engst, in May 2017. Joe brings his decades of experience as author of more than 60 books on tech topics (including many popular Take Control titles) to his role as Publisher. Morgen’s professional background is in development work for nonprofit organizations, and she employs those skills as Director of Marketing and Publicity. Joe and Morgen live in San Diego with their two children and their cat.

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